DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 146 SO 030 192

AUTHOR Garner, Jane; And Others
TITLE Television News and Presidential Campaigns: The Legitimization of Televised Political Advertising.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 28p.; Paper prsented at the Annual Convention of the International Communication Association (Dublin, Ireland, June 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elections; Higher Education; *Mass Media Role; *News Reporting; *Political Campaigns; *Political Influences; Political Issues; *Presidential Campaigns (United States); *Television
IDENTIFIERS *Television News

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the way that network television covered televised political advertising in presidential campaigns from 1972 through 1988. The findings indicated a substantial increase in the coverage of spots on the network evening news in 1988. In addition, 1988 coverage tended to cover negative spots more than positive ones and was more likely to be characterized by an unfavorable than a favorable slant. The suggestion is made that this increased exposure may have benefited campaigns by providing free airing of their spots, as well as legitimizing the use of political commercials as a factor in voter decision making. (NL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED323146

TELEVISION NEWS AND PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS:
THE LEGITIMIZATION OF TELEVISED POLITICAL ADVERTISING

By

Jane Garner

Rob Gobetz

Lynda Lee Kaid

Chris Leland

David K. Scott

Susan Whitney

Department of Communication
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK 73019
(405) 325-3111

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

DAVID K. SCOTT

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper Presented to the International Communication Association Convention
Dublin, June, 1990

SO 020 192

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TELEVISION NEWS AND PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS:
THE LEGITIMIZATION OF TELEVISED POLITICAL ADVERTISING

(abstract)

This study used content analysis to investigate the way in which network television news has covered televised political advertising in presidential campaigns from 1972 through 1988. Findings documented a substantial increase in coverage of spots on the network evening news in 1988. In addition, 1988 coverage tended to cover negative spots more than positive ones and was more likely to be characterized by an unfavorable than a favorable slant. The authors suggest that this increased exposure may have benefited campaigns by providing free airing of their spots, as well as legitimizing the use of political commercials as a factor in voter decision-making.

TELEVISION NEWS AND PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS:

THE LEGITIMIZATION OF TELEVISED POLITICAL ADVERTISING

Media professional Tony Schwartz (1984) once declared that in the past "political parties were the means of communication from the candidate to public. The political parties today are ABC, NBC, and CBS" (p. 82). Indeed, with the emergence of television as an intricate component of American society, the United States electoral process has become increasingly dependent on the successful use of this medium. For most candidates, the preferred message format for television communication is the political spot advertisement (Jamieson, 1984). However, while a candidate can control his/her television ads, s/he must also contend with television news coverage upon which nearly two-thirds of the American public rely for information (Roper, 1987) and over which his/her control is much less direct or certain. Compounding the problem for both candidate and public is that fact that television news and television ads have grown more closely intertwined in recent campaigns, as television advertising has become the content of television news. The study reported here uses content analysis to explore television news coverage of political advertising over the past five presidential campaigns.

Presidential campaigns have been increasingly dependent on television advertising to reach the largest number of voters per dollar. In the 1988 presidential campaign, the two major party

candidates, George Bush and Michael Dukakis, spent a combined total of $65 million on television advertisements alone (Devlin, 1989). The Democratic and Republican party contributed another $14 million in television advertising to their respective candidates, and several State party systems added their own amounts to the pool (Devlin, 1989).

Earlier elections demonstrated the same type of spending as the 1988 campaign. From 1972 to 1984, media packages constituted significant portions of presidential campaign budgets. In 1980, for instance, mass media advertising consumed over half of the monetary outlay of the Carter and Reagan campaigns (Alexander, 1984).

Such expenditures are not unjustified. Clearly, there has been a shift away from the early diagnosis (Klapper, 1960; Patterson and McClure, 1976) that television and its various formats (news and ads) do not affect viewers/voters. Experimental evidence has suggested that exposure to television messages can have a positive effect on some aspects of candidate image (Cundy, 1986; Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Keating & Latane, 1976; Meadow & Sigelman, 1982). More voters watch spot advertisements than the network news (Jamieson, 1984), and studies show that political advertising increases knowledge about candidates and issue and directly influences voting behavior (Kaid, 1981). According to a New York Times/CBS poll, one fourth of all voters in the 1988 presidential campaign admitted that political advertisements had

been helpful in making a choice (Oreskes, 1988). This amount was twice as many as admitted the same thing in 1984 (Oreskes, 1988).

It is not difficult to understand, then, why candidates place so much emphasis on the controllable spot ad. It is less immediately apparent why television newscasts would give valuable air time to political ads. Even the casual observer of television political coverage would surely note the increased attention given to the candidates' ads by network news. As J. Leonard Reinsch noted, "Networks accepted televised political spot ads for the first time in 1984. Their news stories even ran analyses of local television spots" (Reinsch, 1988, p. 255). In a scathing attack on the performance of television news in the 1988 campaign, Boot (1989) complains, "Confusion was compounded in 1988 by a proliferation of television news reports about commercials, of commercials inspired by news reports, and of commercials about commercials" (p. 31).

One explanation for the apparent increase in network news emphasis on television ads may be the ability of the ads to serve as a ready source of video for journalists. Television's need for visuals to use in the construction of each story segment is well-known (Epstein, 1973; Gans, 1979; Berkman & Kitch, 1986). Stories about television ads not only have obvious built-in visual content, but the ads can also serve as visuals for story lines in which the ads themselves play only a minor role.

Political spot ads incorporate another characteristic which may make them particularly good "fodder" for the news media. Political advertising, because of its partisan and adversarial nature, often generates conflict, and conflict and drama are defining elements of television news. As Paletz and Entman (1981) note, "Reporters and editors want news--defined as conflict, controversy, duplicity, and scandal" (p. 32). The heavy emphasis in the 1988 presidential campaign on negative advertisements and messages was ready-made for television news. Such controversy-laden material with available video may have been particularly attractive to reporters during a campaign in which the campaign strategy of the Republican contender emphasized restricted access to the candidate (Boot, 1989).

This intertwining of television news and advertising has received little attention by scholars or journalists. Consequently, this study addressed several research questions about television news coverage of political television commercials.

RQ_1 Has television news coverage of political television commercials increased from 1972 through 1988?

RQ_2 What elements of the news environment characterize the television news coverage of political commercials?

RQ_3 Does television news focus more on negative advertising than on positive advertising?

RQ_4 Is there any apparent slant to television news coverage of political advertising?

METHOD

The research approach chosen for this project was content analysis of television news coverage of televised political advertising. The basic data were drawn from the Vanderbilt Television News Index and Abstracts and from videotapes of network newscasts. The news story was chosen as the appropriate unit of analysis. All stories which related to the presidential campaigns in election years 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1988 on all three national television networks during the last eight weeks of the general election campaign composed the sample of stories in this analysis.[1]

For all stories which mentioned the presidential campaign during the last eight weeks, network and total story time in seconds were recorded. All stories which mentioned television advertising by the candidates were then selected for more detailed analysis.[2] Several categories were devised for recording information about each story on political television advertising. In addition to date, time, and network, coders determined the focus of the story (if television advertising was the dominant focus of the story or just part of another broader story). Coders also recorded whether or not the placement of the story was in the first, second, or third ten minutes of the newscast. The newscaster (anchor or other reporter) was noted, the type of story (routine campaign report, special feature on advertising, candidate profile, or issue story) was recorded, and the candidate/party the

ads supported was entered. A another concern was what type of experts, if any, were relied upon by the newscasters in the story. Here distinctions were made between media consultants, members of the candidates' campaign staffs, the actual presidential or vice-presidential candidates, media commentators, academicians, or other types of experts.

A further level of analysis was involved for the 1988 stories. These stories were viewed in their totality on videotape and then coded for the number of spots shown, type of ad shown (positive, negative, or both), length of time ads were shown, and the slant (favorable/positive, unfavorable/negative or neutral) of the news story. The latter variable was determined by how the newscasters handled the advertising in the news story. If the newscasters seemed to evaluate the advertising, offering opinions or labelling the advertising as good or bad, the story was coded as positive or negative accordingly. If straightforward presentation was involved and no opinions or evaluations were offered, the story was coded as neutral.

Six trained graduate students coded the stories from the abstracts and the videotapes, recording the information on prepared code sheets and following a codebook defining each category. In order to determine the intercoder reliability coefficient all coders coded a sample of 18 stories about televised political advertising drawn from the total sample of 131 stories. On this sample intercoder reliability ranged from +.77 to +.94, for an

average intercoder reliability of +.87.[3]

RESULTS

Increase in Advertising Coverage

Overall the results show a startling increase in the coverage of television campaign advertising in the 1988 election. Table 1 indicates that the total number of campaign stories which mentioned candidate commercials increased from 13 in 1972 to 79 in 1988. The increase is not, however, an even, year-by-year expansion. The years 1976 and 1984 show unusually small numbers of stories about the advertising. It is also important to note that the dramatic increase in advertising coverage on the network news in 1988 is not due solely to an increase in overall coverage of the campaign. Table 1 also includes the total amounts numbers of stories and time devoted to campaign coverage in each year, as well as the totals for stories which included campaign advertising. These numbers clearly show that the percentages of stories and time devoted to the ads increased substantially in 1988.

Table 1 about here

In addition to an absolute increase in the number of stories devoted to campaign advertising, Table 1 also indicates that the networks were much more likely in 1988 to show the ads as part of their story coverage. In 1988, for instance, 91.1% of the stories which included discussion of the advertising also aired portions

of one or more campaign commercials during the evening news.

Characteristics of News Coverage of Campaign Advertising

One of the most interesting aspects of the coverage of campaign advertising on network news was the finding that NBC used more stories containing campaign advertising discussion than did the other two networks. As Table 2 shows, over the course of the five elections studied here 38.2% of the news stories which included campaign advertising were carried by NBC, compared to 30.5% on ABC and 31.3% on CBS. This distinction among networks was true, not only in the overall sample, but in 1980, 1984, and 1988 as well.

Table 2 about here

The consideration of how stories were placed during the newscasts also produced interesting results. Taking the entire sample of 131 stories over the 16 years, 69.5% of the stories which included campaign advertising occurred in the first 10 minutes of the newscasts (see Table 2). In 1988, this percentage of early placement stories jumped to 74.7%. Across the entire 16 year sample, there was an interesting difference among networks in story placement. Although NBC aired more stories about advertising, this network was less likely to give the stories significance by placing them in the early portion of the newscast. ABC placed 87.5% of such stories in the first 10 minutes of the newscast, while the

corresponding percentages for CBS and NBC were 73.2% and 52.0% respectively.

Campaign advertising was most likely to be discussed during a routine campaign report. Over 76% of all stories which included discussion of campaign advertising occurred during such stories. Over the five election periods, 19 (15%) of the stories were feature stories which focused exclusively on campaign advertising, and more of these (42%) occurred in 1988 than in any other year. Campaign advertising coverage rarely occurred in stories which focused on campaign issues.

When the networks incorporate material about advertising in their newcasts, they often turn to various types of "experts" to comment on and evaluate the campaign advertising. This research categorized the types of experts into 6 major categories, (1) independent political consultants, (2) political consultants working for the campaigns being discussed, (3) campaign staff and officials, (4) the candidates themselves, (5) independent media consultants, and (6) academic experts. Generally, the networks relied on comments from those actually working in the campaigns or associated with the candidates. Out of a total of 70 experts cited in the 131 stories considered, 49 of the "experts" were either political consultants working for the campaigns, campaign staff members, or the candidates themselves. Only five times did the networks turn to academic experts for opinions on the advertising; all five of these occasions occurred in 1988.

Another characteristic of the news stories concerned the political party or candidate on which the advertising coverage focused. In the entire sample, the Republicans were the most frequent subject of campaign advertising coverage, featuring in 38.9% of the stories about advertising. Table 2 shows that Democrats were the focus of 28.2% of the stories, independents were covered in 3.8%, and 29% of the stories incorporated discussion of candidates from both major political parties.

Slant of Coverage

Because the stories for 1988 were actually viewed, rather than just relying on the abstracts for basic information, it was possible to determine more about how the advertising was handled in the 1988 campaign coverage. In the 79 stories shown in 1988, portions of 159 campaign commercials were shown, an average of over two spots per story, as Table 3 shows. In fact, 11 stories aired more than 4 commercials; some stories included as many as 14. In every case, only a portion of the commercial was aired, but often the only part which was cut was the ending disclaimer or some beginning establishing shots.

Table 3 about here

In 1988 when the networks discussed campaign advertising, they were much more likely to air negative ads than positive ads. Over 77% of the advertising stories in 1988 aired a negative ad for the

audience. Positive ads were shown in only 35% of the stories.

It is not surprising that most of the stories about advertising were given a "neutral" rating by coders. As Table 3 shows, 74.7% of the campaign advertising stories received this rating. However, when a slant was present, it was overwhelmingly negative. In fact, nearly one-fourth (22.8%) of all the 1988 stories was considered negative in its handling of the campaign advertising. Only two stories (2.5%) were rated as positive.

DISCUSSION

There is no question that the most striking finding of this analysis is the tremendous increase in coverage of political advertising by nightly network news broadcasts from 1972 to 1988. While the data do not display a consistent increase from year to year, the dramatic increase for 1988 is in itself phenomenal. One might be tempted to suggest that this was due to an overall increase in coverage of the presidential campaigns by the networks, but Table 1 belies this explanation. The number of stories and amount of time involved for stories which include televised political advertising clearly represent a larger <u>percentage</u> of overall coverage in 1988 than in previous years. And, of course, the absolute number of stories in 1988 (79) is more than the sum of the stories for all of the other presidential election years from 1972 through 1984.

Stories about political spots are also given significance by the networks through their early placement in the newscasts. Such content was not buried in the newscasts; commentary on the spots almost always came in the first ten minutes of a newscast, often incorporated into the lead story of the evening on the campaign.

The 1988 coverage was phenomenal for other reasons. Over the course of the eight weeks covered by this study, the networks showed portions of 159 commercials, representing millions of dollars in free advertising time for the candidates. For strategists on both sides, this must have seemed like a dream come

true. Every candidate places high priority on generating coverage on the nightly network news. To receive coverage via the presentation of one's own pre-packaged message could be considered the ultimate achievement.

Why would the television networks be willing to grant this advantage, this free airing of controlled candidate messages, to the presidential candidates? Several reasons are suggested by the inherent structure of the news organizations. First, television's predisposition to the visual, the dramatic, the controversial is well-known (Altheide, 1976; Altheide & Snow, 1988; Epstein, 1973). Political advertising feeds these modern television needs more effectively than most forms of political discourse. The juxtaposition of one candidate against another in many commercials makes for good drama and often for controversy, an effect highlighted by the increased emphasis on negative commercials. In addition, the commercials are themselves ready and effortless sources of video for the evening news. Budget cutting at all three networks may account for the increased use of political spots as available video because of the expense of daily campaign coverage. Networks may be relying more on political advertisements because of their cost-saving characteristics.

A second reason for the increased coverage of political spots may lie in the fact that television spots, particularly negative ones, have become an accepted form of political argument and debate (Baukus, Payne, & Reisler, 1985). In recent years, technology has

made it possible for candidates to engage in dialogue with each other directly through their spots, resulting in well-known sequences in which one spot appears, is answered by the opponent in a spot which is followed by a yet another spot responding to the response, and so on. As such, the spots represent a level of political debate that networks have come to acknowledge as "newsworthy." This clash between the candidates has become such an important part of the campaign that the networks have found themselves forced to cover the confrontation. Particularly when negative spots are involved, political discourse of this type is consistent also with the tendency of television news programming to emphasize coverage of negative news, resulting in more drama to enhance network ratings and viewer interests.

Third, the coverage of political spots is consistent with the general network approach to campaign coverage. It has been well-documented in previous campaigns that the media devote most of their coverage to the "horserace" aspects of the campaign, focusing on who's ahead and on what strategy each candidate is pursuing (Graber, 1989). Political spots provide a convenient way of monitoring and reporting on each candidate's strategies. Issues are easily avoided. Despite findings of earlier research that political advertising contains substantial amounts of issue information (Joslyn, 1980), this study found that spots were rarely covered in the context of issue stories.

A fourth reason for the increased coverage may be that the ads themselves became an issue in the 1988 campaign. Certainly, accusations about negative campaigning gained considerable attention in the media. This, however, may be a chicken-and-egg problem. Was the advertising in this campaign more negative than in previous campaigns or was the coverage by the network news focused more sharply on the negative commercials than had been true in previous years?

This latter concern focuses attention on the findings in this study that the network news gives much more coverage to negative than to positive spots. Was this true because the campaign spots were truly more negative than positive? The facts belie this interpretation. The political spot arsenals of neither Bush nor Dukakis contained even a majority of negative commercials. Bush aired 37 commercials, of which 14 were negative (38%) and Dukakis aired 47 ads of which 23 (49%) were negative. Yet 77% of the network news stories on political advertising contained negative ads (Devlin, 1989).

The networks, in fact, seemed determined to make the ads the focus of the campaign and to do so in a negative way. The fact that negative ads received priority in their coverage and that the slant of their coverage was more often negative than positive lends credence to this interpretation. A good example of how the networks treated the ads is NBC's October 5 feature on spots. In this 180 second story, 93 seconds of actual spot footage was shown

with excerpts from 14 different spots. The story basically attempted to juxtapose advertising with news, saying that advertising gives the candidate "total control." An interview with an academic expert is included in which the expert basically presents a very negative view of spots, saying that you "never get a clear and complete picture" from spots and that spots sell candidates "like cornflakes."

Did this negative approach to the spots prove harmful to the candidates? Probably not. Whatever the networks' intentions in focusing on negative spots and providing an unfavorable slant on them, the candidates probably came out the winners. As Kalb (1988) noted recently in Time magazine, "by controlling the pictures you end up controlling the content" (p. 66). Political media consultant Tony Schwartz (1973) has argued that airing negative ads is itself a powerful way to "structure the effects of nonpaid media" (p. 97). When a candidate airs a negative ad about the opponent, the most desirable effect is for that issue or argument to become a salient news item. In 1988 the networks, by focusing on negative ads, helped the campaigns achieve their goals.

Finally, it seems likely that the increased news coverage of televised political spots in 1988 served to legitimize spots once and for all. Lazarsfeld and Merton's historic assumptions about the conferring of status and legitimization are easily applied here; "...if a person is given attention by the press, then surely he or she must be important...status is derived from the level of

attention given to the person by the press" (Lowery & DeFleur, 1988, p. 444). Surely political advertising was accorded status and importance by the emphasis placed on it by the television news.

Despite the interest of the findings from this content analysis of television news coverage of political spots, several limitations to the study must be noted. The use of the Vanderbilt Television News Archive for abstracts was a limiting factor for the coding of the years before 1988. While the abstracts are a good summary of information about the content of television coverage and financial constraints dictated their use for this study, there is no guarantee that the abstracts are consistently compiled from year to year or that the same type of information is included. Thus, the researchers cannot be sure that every story which contained political advertising mentions or which actually showed footage from a political spot was accordingly designated in the abstracts. This caution is not merely speculative, as the researchers found in analyzing the actual tapes for 1988 that the videotapes revealed five stories in which ads were mentioned and parts of spots were shown, but the abstracts for these stories did not mention this information. This oversight could have occurred for previous years as well.

Another limitation to the study, again related to the use of the abstracts, is the fact that the abstracts combine such large amounts of material into story segments. Often a campaign report will include many other items, as well as information on political

spots. It was not possible with the abstracts to separate the amount of actual time devoted to the spots in these stories, only the composite time of the story. The actual videotapes would be necessary to make this distinction.

Further research is needed to determine the rationale and the effects for the increased news coverage. Interviews with network correspondents and producers might shed light on the reasons for the increase, perhaps verifying or rejecting some of the possibilities offered here. Also neglected here are explanations which might derive from the conduct of the campaigns themselves. The effects of the increase pose particularly interesting questions. In addition to recognizing the ads as a form of legitimate political discourse, did the network coverage actually become a handmaiden of the campaigns? Perhaps the increased coverage of spots on the news made viewers believe that it was acceptable to consider the spots in their decision-making process. Such potential effects need to be investigated. It may not be coincidental that a CBS/NYT poll near the end of the election found that one-fourth of voters say that television spots are helpful in making up their minds about the candidates; only half that number admitted such reliance on spots in 1984 (Oreskes, 1988).

NOTES

1. Although the abstracts of newscasts are available for 1968, Vanderbilt's method of recording time made use of that year infeasible due to the noncomparability with 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1988.

2. Stories selected were only those which specifically mentioned advertising by the candidates or campaigns. Stories which mentioned only paid speeches or addresses were presumed to apply to longer, non-advertising formats and were excluded from the detailed analysis.

3. In computing the intercoder reliability, the formula used was that suggested by Holsti (North, Holsti, Zaninovvch, & Zinnes, 1963) and was modified for more than two coders:

$$R = \frac{(C_{1,2})}{C_1 + C_2}$$

where: $C_{1,2}$ = the number of category assignments both coders agree upon

$C_1 + C_2$ = the total category assignments made by both coders

REFERENCES

Alexander, H. E. (1984). Making sense about dollars in the 1980 presidential campaigns. In M. J. Malbin (ed.), Money and politics in the United States: Financing elections in the 1980's. Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House.

Altheide, D. L. (1976). Creating reality. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Altheide, D. L., & Snow, R. P. (1988). Toward a theory of mediation. In J. A. Anderson (Ed.), Communication yearbook 11 (pp. 194-223). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Baukus, R. A., Payne, J. G., & Reisler, M. S. (1985). Negative polispots: Mediated arguments in the political arena. In J. R. Cox, M. O. Sillars, and G. B. Walker (Eds.), Argument and social practice: Proceedings of the Fourth SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation (pp. 236-252). Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.

Berkman, R., & Kitch, J. W. (1986). Politics in the media age. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Boot, William. (1989, January/February) Campaign '88: TV overdoses on the inside dope. Columbia Journalism Review. 25-31.

Cundy, D.T. (1986) Political commercials and candidate image. In L.L. Kaid, D. Nimmo, & K.R. Sanders (eds.), New perspectives on political advertising (pp. 210-234). Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press.

Devlin, L. P. (1989, March). Contrasts in presidential campaign commercials of 1988. American Behavioral Scientist, 32, 4, 389-414.

Epstein, E. J. (1973). News from nowhere. New York: Random House.

Gans, H. (1979). Deciding what's news. New York: Pantheon.

Graber, D. A. (1989). Mass media and American politics (3rd ed.) Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Jamieson, K. H. (1984). Packaging the presidency: A history and criticism of presidential campaign advertising. New York: Oxford University Press.

Joslyn, R. A. (1980). The content of political spot ads. Journalism Quarterly, 57, 92-98.

Kaid, L. L. (1981). Political advertising. In D. Nimmo & K. R. Sanders (Eds.), Handbook of political communication (pp. 249-271). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Kaid, L. L., & Sanders, K. R. (1978). Political television commercials: An experimental study of type and length. Communication Research, 5, 193-201.

Kalb, B. (1988, June 14). Time, 66.

Keating, J. P. & Latane, B. (1976). Politicians on TV: The image is the message. Journal of Social Issues, 32, 116-32.

Klapper, J. T. (1960) The effects of mass communication. Glencoe IL: Free Press.

Lowery, S. A., & DeFleur, M. L. (1988). Milestones in mass communication research (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

Meadow, R. G., & Sigelman, L. (1982). Some effects and noneffects of campaign commercials. Political Behavior, 4, 163-75.

North, R. C., Holsti, O., Zaninovvch, M. G., & Zinnes, D. A. (1963). Content analysis : A handbook with applications for the study of international crisis. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Oreskes, M. (1988, October 30). TV's role in '88: The medium is the election. New York Times, pp. 1, 19.

Paletz, D. L., & Entman, R. (1981). Media-power-politics. New York: Free Press.

Patterson, T. E., & McClure, R. D. (1976). The unseeing eye: The myth of television power in national politics. New York: Putman.

Reinsch, J. L. (1988). Getting elected. New York: Hippocrene Books.

Roper Organization (1987). America's watching: Public attitudes toward television. New York: Television Information Office.

Schwartz, T. (1973). The responsive chord. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Books.

Schwartz, T. (1984). Media: The second god. New York: Anchor Press.

Table 1
Network News Coverage of Political Commercials
from 1972 through 1988

	Ad Stories	Ad Story Time *	Total Stories	Total Coverage Time *	Ads** Shown
1972	13	1700	463	47790	0
1976	8	1760	480	50140	3
1980	24	7420	259	68676	16
1984	7	2060	239	55730	7
1988	79	18780	361	66772	72
Total	131	31540	1802	298108	98

*time in seconds
**number of stories in which ads were shown

Table 2
Characteristics of Network News Coverage
of Political Commercials

Placement

1st 10m	91	(69.5%)
2nd 10m	25	(19.1%)
3rd 10m	15	(11.5%)

Network

	All years		1988	
ABC	40	(30.5%)	23	(29.1%)
CBS	41	(31.3%)	25	(31.6%)
NBC	50	(38.2%)	31	(39.2%)

Party of Candidate Sponsoring Ad

Republican	51	(38.9%)
Democrat	37	(28.2%)
Independent	5	(3.8%)
Combination	38	(29.0%)

Table 3
Spots Shown and Story Slant for 1988
Network News Coverage

Stories Showing Spots

72	show spots
7	do not

Number of Spots Shown

1	37	
2	17	(34)
3	6	(18)
4	3	(9)
5	2	(10)
6	1	(6)
7	2	(14)
8	1	(8)
9 or more	2	(23)

Total Spots Shown: 159

Negative Spots Featured in Story

Yes	61	(77.2%)
No	18	(22.8%)

Positive Spots Featured in Story

Yes	28	(35.4%)
No	51	(64.6%)

Party of Candidate Sponsoring Ad(s)

Republican	29	(36.7%)
Democrat	23	(29.1%)
Combination	27	(34.2%)

Slant of Coverage

Positive/favorable	2	(2.5%)
Negative/unfavorable	18	(22.8%)
Neutral	59	(74.7%)